# PANCHAYATI RAJ

*(Incorporating Gram Sevak)*

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(Incorporating Gram Sevak)

*JYAISTHA-ASADHA 1882*

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# *Our Minister's Monthly letter to Peasants and Villagers of India—3*

Camp : *Srinagar,*
*June* 19, 1960.

*Dear Friend,*

YOU WILL have read and heard about the two conferences we have just concluded at Srinagar. One has been the annual conference on Community Development. The other has been the conference of the State Ministers of Cooperation. The two conferences have been held separately one following the other; but, they have dealt with the same basic problems.

THESE CONFERENCES are important by their own rights. This year's conferences have had a special importance attached to them. We had appointed two important committees. One dealt with cooperative farming. The other dealt with cooperative credit for all members of the village community. The first committee was headed by Shri S. Nijalingappa, ex-Chief Minister of Mysore. The second committee was led by Shri V. L. Mehta, Chairman of the Khadi & Village Industries Commission and an outstanding Cooperator over more than 40 years. We had also the Third Five Year Plan on the anvil which begins from April, 1961.

**CRUCIAL ISSUES**

THE CONFERENCES this year, therefore, had to have their eyes specially directed to these crucial issues. True, we have discussed almost all aspects of the Community Development Programme, Panchayati Raj and the Sahakari Samaj. But, you would like to know the basic decisions we have taken of which you can feel proud, which you can pursue at your end. The decisions can broadly be summed up as follows :—

(1) Production, more especially production in agriculture, has been accepted as the supreme priority of the hour.

(2) Economic assistance to the weaker sections of our village community has been accepted as the highest social priority.

(3) Joint cooperative farming combining village industries has been accepted as the only way out to serve the weaker sections of the village community and to increase production on marginal land holdings.

(4) Better understanding has been achieved of the utility of Panchayati Raj as the base to our democracy. (The States such as Andhra and Rajasthan which have implemented Panchayati Raj had plenty to tell of their experiences to carry faith and conviction to others):

**GOVERNMENT AND VILLAGES**

THE PROCEEDINGS of the conferences are now being compiled. Firm decisions will be taken at Government level based on these recommendations. Government policies will then travel from the centre to the remotest villages. I write this letter to you through the medium of *Panchayati Raj* because it may be some time before the formal recommendations of Government reach your hands. You are the soldiers on the battle front. You must know what transpired at these national conferences.

WE ARE EAGER in India to build roads, hospitals and schools, to provide electricity, post and telegraph offices, telephone and radio facilities for every home. We are anxious to introduce machines to reduce the burden on our workers who struggle to grow food or produce things for consumption. All these require industries, big machines and heavy investment. The biggest industry we have in India is the one of food production. If there is to be saving for investment, it has necessarily to come from surplus in agriculture. But we do not produce enough even to feed ourselves.

We have to beg our food of others. This is a matter of shame. It spells danger to our freedom. If we produce more from agriculture, all else will follow automatically. You should understand why we must attach the highest priority to food production.

However, food production alone will not go very far. We have iron and steel, fertiliser, sugar and textile mills. We cannot have large factories to produce goods we need for daily consumption and implements for agriculture. We must, therefore, concentrate also on cottage and small-scale industries. Village industries grow thus to be the next important sector of our productive activity. Village industries can be worked only by the marginal landholders and the landless in our villages. Till now, our economic assistance has flowed through natural gravity to the richer sections of our village community. They alone can offer security. Others cannot. We have, therefore, taken the decision hereafter, to offer assistance as a priority to marginal landholders and the landless in our villages.

**COOPERATIVE FARMING**

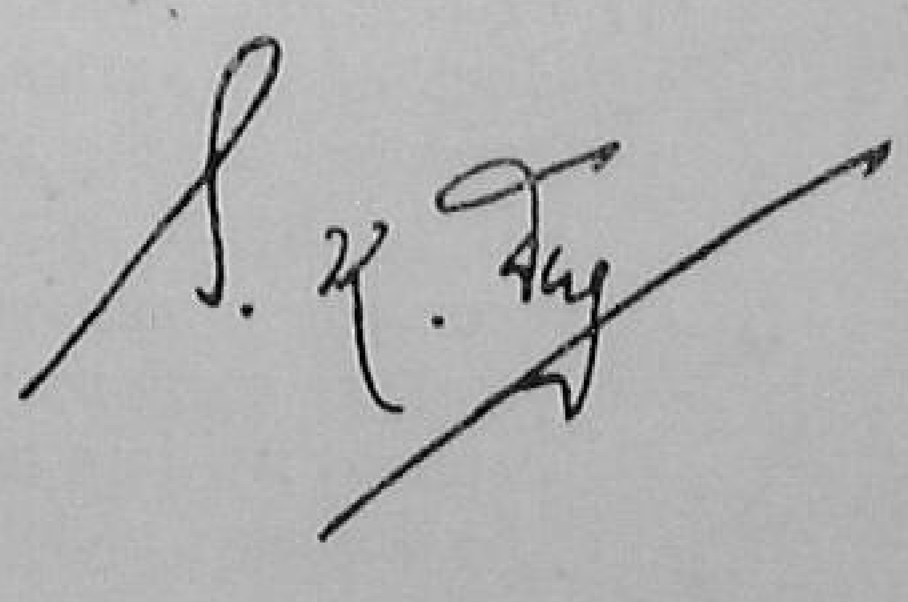
This, however, cannot be achieved just by issuing instructions on paper. The marginal landholders and the landless must be combined in an organisation at the village level. Organisation alone can give the members of this community the strength which they lack individually. The only organisation we can conceive of for this purpose is the joint cooperative farm. We propose to combine joint cooperative farming with village industries. The marginal landholders and the landless can be helped collectively to develop improved techniques and practices for food production. Simultaneously, they can also be helped to set up processing and other village industries which can add to the village wealth, give employment to the underemployed and the unemployed and also serve local needs.

A nation-wide training and education programme is visualised for this purpose in the Third Five Year Plan. The programme will be designed for officials, non-official representatives and the people. There will be institutions. There will also be peripatetic parties carrying the programme direct to the people in our villages. The strength of a tree lies in the strength of the roots. Our community is like a tree. The roots are our people. The strength of the community will, therefore, be in the strength of our people. Strength in a democracy means the understanding first of the obligations by the masses of our people. The rights will follow as a matter of course when the obligations have been discharged adequately. You will understand now why training and education grow to be so important for us.

**MESSAGE OF SHANKARACHARYA**

We have set the socialist pattern of society as the goal for India. Our socialism is to be based on democracy. Neither socialism nor democracy can survive if the stomach is empty, if one section of our people live in affluence and the other in perpetual poverty. We have, therefore, to concentrate on increased production and on social justice side by side. The Srinagar conferences have been a landmark because they have given a special mandate to all workers in the Panchayati Raj and the Sahakari Samaj movement. The temple of Shankaracharya in the mountain adjoining the conference hall was there to remind us all that "Man was born in freedom, to grow in freedom and to melt away in freedom". Our deliberations and the conclusions we reached have, therefore, been based on the prime condition that this freedom shall not be bartered in the struggle to secure bread, clothing and shelter which we plan for the nation. We have also resolved that the freedom shall not be used as a cloak by the wily few to rob and plunder the unwary.

Yours sincerely,



# OUR NEW ROLES

B. MEHTA

THE INTRODUCTION of Panchayati Raj makes it worthwhile for us to examine the new role that each one of us, officials and non-officials, from top downwards, are called upon to play. And these roles need adjustment in relationships, not only administrative adjustments but psychological too. Psychological adjustment compatible with the changed conditions around us, should have primacy over other adjustments. A new psychology of approach has to develop in the official and the non-official leader to bring into existence a relationship of an advisory rather than regulatory character. A new hierarchy based not on power but on the depth of professional wisdom and richness of experience has to be set up.

## GRAM SEVAK

Among officials at the village level the most important ones in direct touch with the stream of community life, and whose professional roles have a straight bearing on it are the village level worker, the school teacher and the Patwari. The villagers know the village level worker as the Gram Sevak. He has now to be alive to the significance of this popular designation. Instead of merely persuading people on behalf of an outside agency to accomplish programmes planned elsewhere, he has to help the Panchayat to develop initiative in planning and to guide it in executing their plans. His technical skill and knowledge are to be at the disposal of the Panchayats and his achievements and his failings are to be assessed in terms of approval or otherwise of these bodies.

## TEACHER

The village school-master's role has lately been reduced to that of a mere class-room teacher. At present he considers teaching on the basis of the prescribed syllabus as the end all of his role. Only a few decades back he used to be the veritable leader of the community he was working in, and his advice was more readily and more universally accepted than that of any other person. He acquired this unchallenged power of leadership over the people through his ability and service to the community in a variety of ways. He exhibited his personality in almost all the cultural and ritualistic activities of the community. He had so completey identified himself with one and all in the village, and with the collective life in it, that he was almost indispensable. He was a teacher of village children, organiser of ceremonial functions, *Kathawachak*, informal adviser, religious guide and so forth. Conditions of life and service have greatly affected his role. His administrative allegiance to an agency remote from the village he works in, and the narrow view taken of his duty to the community, have enfeebled his leadership almost to the point of extinction. This has had a very unwholesome effect on community life. He has to be re-established in his old role. Side by side with the role in the class-room, he has to generate and develop people's appreciation for education or else much of our colossal efforts in this direction will have gone waste. By precept, example and continued effort, he has to strive to become the accepted guide and counsellor of the community.

## PATWARI

The Patwari has also to assume a new role. In doing his professional work, he has to change his entire approach. He cannot function in the old groove. He should exploit his centuries-old prestige with the people for confirming their faith in progressive ideas and practices, and incorporate in his professional role, the role of an extension worker also. Thus can he become helpful to the community, in reaching quick and correct decisions on disputed points.

At the block level the Block Development officer will have to play a very different and delicate role. All his experience, training and administrative acumen have to be placed in an unreserved manner at the disposal of the Panchayat Samiti. While he

should assist them with his wider knowledge, he should, in all sincerity, desist from overriding their decisions. A good servant carries out what his master plans. The Block Development officer as an executive will also, to the utmost in him, execute the decision of the Panchayat Samiti. Thus in his new role he will have truly become the people's servant.

**B.D.O.**

His role as a coordinator will be to guide the Panchayat Samitis in the formulation of Block plans in the light of the bigger plans at the high levels as also of those made by the Panchayats at their own level. He may have also to guide the Samiti to appreciate the need of coordination with other agencies and organisations engaged in one or the other spheres of development and suggest steps to make such coordination possible.

Now that the Block Development officer will have almost no interference from above in the matter of programmes or in the matter of evaluation of his achievements, he can in a very devoted manner apply himself to carrying out the decisions of the Panchayat Samitis. It does not need any further administrative adjustment to enable him to function efficiently in this role. But it certainly needs a psychological adjustment to sincerely function as peoples' servant to translate the implied into the obvious.

In relation to his Extension officers, the Block Development officer will continue to play the role of the Captain of the team, each Extension officer receiving from him the necessary guidance to contribute his utmost in the accomplishment of what has been planned by the members of the Samiti in the field of his speciality.

**E.O.'s**

With the formation of the special sub-committees for the execution of different parts of the programme, and the Extension officers' association with these committees, will make them conscious of their role as technical guides both in planning and execution of plans at the block and the Panchayat levels.

The Tehsildar in the capacity of the Chief Executive of the Samiti will have to play the same role as the Block Development officer. The Tehsildar may, however, find it more difficult to achieve the necessary psychological adjustment than the Block Development officer. The stiffness of the Block Development officer as an executive and as an administrator, has been, to a degree, softened by the nature of his work, by his association with the people and by his training. The regulatory element in the Tehsildar's role has to disappear and has to be replaced by that of obedience and service to the people.

**COLLECTOR**

At the district level the Collector has his dual role to play. As one responsible for law and order, he has to discharge the regulatory functions of his post. He, as district development officer, has to keep his eyes open and see how best he can help each Panchayat Samiti to develop its functional character and attain individuality as an administrative unit. At his own level he will also have to see that each district head of development assumes and fulfils his role as an adviser to the Panchayat Samiti and contributes to the development of the technical efficiency of the officer down the line at the block level.

The district level officers in the role of technical advisers, in respect of programmes, falling within the administrative jurisdiction of the Panchayat Samitis, will function through the extension officers. Thus there will be a closer collaboration between the two levels—the district and the block, and the district head will have been brought much closer to the ground through his constant and continued association with the field worker. This will also provide him with the chance of his own growth, for no worker working in the field of people's welfare can grow if he remains out of touch with the ground on which the people work and live.

# LETTERS

## I and my Villagers

Sir,

It is nearly 18 months since I joined Mandya Block. When I went round all the villages of my circle, I could not think of how I could build up a programme for the alround development of all these villages. I had discussions with the people and also with the Extension staff. I realised that I had to take up some villages for intensive work and the others for normal work. Kallahally and Konanahally were selected for intensive activity.

My programme, first of all, meant to me frequent visits and interviews with the people and explaining to them what I had in my mind and obtaining their consent. This helped me a lot to involve them in the implementation of the programme. Particularly in paddy cultivation I could help them to increase their yield. Through talks, method and result demonstrations, I could impress upon them, the value of Japanese method of cultivation. About 70 per cent of cultivators have adopted this method. Thus they realised an increase of about 10 pallas per acre. This has created an urge in them for achieving other things.

In both the villages, Young Farmers' Clubs have been started. The Young Farmers' are from time to time contacted. They have their individual projects like Kitchen gardening, improved composting, improved method of paddy cultivation and poultry as common projects. Group projects are common gardening, group discussion, shramdan and recreational activities.

Kallahally has started a rural housing project through which some 30 new houses have already come up on a new site. It is a pleasant model village by itself. Poultry development and fruit gardening are also growing.

The other village is Konanahally, which is like a rising sun, showing all signs of prosperity. The village leaders are very helpful in pushing through the programme. A plan for development of the village was prepared a year ago. In addition to agricultural progress, in common with other villages, it has an active Young Farmers' Club, with a strength of 50 members. They have taken up the school building, the community centre building and have completed drainage work for the entire village. They have also started a new library. They meet frequently to discuss and carry on their activities. They have encouraged the village ladies to organise themselves into a club.

The ladies very recently celebrated a baby show drama, field-day and some of them have put up smokeless chullas. They have learnt soap-making, which is bringing an additional income to their families. For providing healthier conditions for their houses, they have purchased glass tiles for better ventilation and light. They have taken up composting as an important project. Some 50 pits have come up. Members of the ladies and the men's clubs have also undertaken short study tours, in addition to participation in the Block level Youth rally.

The villagers, for the first time in the Block area, have come forward to provide new and free quarters to the school teachers, who are helpful in the activities. Thus these two villages are really drawing the attention of many other villages. The work in the other villages is not neglected. By way of working up such two model villages, the work in other villages would become easy.

Yours etc.

6-5-60 *H. P. Ramanna,*
Kasaba, Gram Sevak
Mandya Development Block,
Mysore State.

## Youth Camps

Sir,

Swami Vivekananda once remarked, "Give me one hundred youths and I will build India". The role of youths in building the country can never be over-emphasized. The millions of village youths trained in the habit of dutifulness, self-help, self-reliance, cooperation, trustfulness, honesty and integrity and infused with the ideals of democracy can alone rebuild our country.

(*Continued on page* 7)

# FROM THE STATES

An army of over 300 workers, led by a woman, is currently engaged in clearing a rivulet of large chunks of earth blocking the stream and repairing the bridge over it near the village Pem, about 20 miles from Kanpur. The chunks of earth, which got into the bed as a result of soil erosion along the banks, have caused widespread water-logging in the area and damaged the bridge which, during the rainy season, provides the only means of communication with the outside world to the neighbouring villages.

The bridge was built with a donation of Rs. 9,000 by the woman commander of the voluntary brigade. Popularly known as Maharani Kunwari, she is the wife of a former zamindar of the village. With a pick and shovel in her hands and sweating under the scorching sun, this middle-aged, delicately-built woman works like any other of the 300 workers determined to complete the task before the onset of the monsoon.

* * * *

The people of 40 villages of the backward "Bet" area of Chamkaur Sahib Community Development block in Rupar Tehsil (Ambala District) came forward for the second time last month to put a stop to the annual flood havoc caused by Siswan, a rivulet. They constructed a 1½ miles long bund on a self-help basis within 15 days. The bund now constructed is 15 feet wide at the top, 40 feet at the base and 4 feet in depth. It involved 22 lakh cubic feet of earth work, of which 11 lakh cubic feet was contributed through shramdan. Over 2,500 men, drawn from all the 40 villages joined hands to accomplish the feat in this short period.

The bund will save more than 800 acres of cultivated land from floods. The peoples' participation in the construction work has saved Rs. 10,000 to the State exchequer. An additional area of 3,000 acres will be reclaimed. In appreciation of the work done by the villagers, 16 radio sets were awarded to the village community.

* * * *

The formation of a cooperative society in Digha near Baraset, 24-Parganas, has saved shoe-making in the village from extinction. Its 60 members and several others in the village sold Rs. 80,000 worth of shoes last year. The Digha Charmashilpa Samabaya Samity was set up in 1958 as a training-*cum*-production centre under the Community Development project. The West Bengal Government's Industries Directorate trained the men to produce better finished shoes of different varieties.

* * * *

The lake-side village of Chinhat—eight miles from Lucknow has been turned into a laboratory for rural research. The U.P. Government's Planning Research and Action Institute is giving field trials here to several of its pilot projects. If successful, these projects will be extended to other parts of the State. These pilot schemes relate to rural health and environmental sanitation, village industries, youth leadership, panchayat organisation and production of energy from cow-dung.

* * * *

Haryana Cooperative Sugar Mills, Rohtak (Punjab) crushed 39,98,000 maunds of sugarcane during the season 1959-60. The cultivators of the ilaqa received Rs. 64,96,750 as the cost of sugarcane supplied to the mills. About 13,03,320 bags of sugar of the value of Rs. 1,33,35,200 were manufactured this season. The mill is expected to earn a profit of Rs. 18 to 19 lakhs, including rebates from the Central Government. The mill which has been working since 1956 showed a deficit of Rs. 18 lakhs during the three years.

* * * *

It is learnt that the first sugar factory to be started on cooperative basis in north Karnatak—the Rs. 1.5 crore Hiranyakeshi cooperative sugar factory at Sankeshwar (Mysore)—is expected to go into production by January 1961.

* * * *

A cooperative house-building society for teachers working in Government schools under the Delhi Administration has been set up at Government Higher Secondary School, Shaktinagar.

* * * *

IT IS LEARNT that financial assistance of Rs. 50,460 has been given to the various co-operative societies of the Vidisha district in Madhya Pradesh. Out of this amount, Rs. 22,500 have been given as loans, Rs. 22,000 as subsidy and the rest amount of Rs. 5,960 for other purposes.

* * * *

THE LUCKNOW Cooperative Milk Supply Union Limited is at present handling over 9,000 maunds of milk per month besides butter and ghee. The share capital and owned capital of the Union increased to Rs. 69,596 and Rs. 5,27,135 respectively. The working capital of the Union went up to over Rs. 10,00,000. The Union was planning to handle ultimately about 2,000 maunds of milk per day after completion of its new dairy project.

* * * *

THE MADHYA PRADESH Government proposes to establish 3,000 service cooperatives this year. Besides, there is a proposal for setting up 200 better farming, 31 marketing and eight processing cooperatives and 86 peripatetic units to train non-official workers of cooperative societies. The outlay for the current year is Rs. 76 lakhs.

## *LETTERS*

*(Continued from page 5)*

Like the '4-H Club' in U.S.A. and 'Chand Tara' in Pakistan, our youth clubs throughout the country should also have a common flag and a badge. These organisations should have uniform mottos and slogans. In order to foster speedy growth of these youth organisations it has been proposed to hold two Youth Leaders' Training Camps in a Block during one year. But two camps in a year may not prove adequate for the purpose. I suggest that such camps should be held in each village level worker's circle. This will accelerate the progress of the youth movement.

4-6-60 Yours etc.
Chilka *P. N. Pani,*
Krishnaprasad
Extension Officer
(Social Education)

### *Bogey of Expenditure*

Sir,

I feel that the stress laid on the achievement of expenditure targets in the Blocks is so high that Block functionaries have to spend money at times anyhow before a particular date. This is more so at the fag end of the financial year when the expenditure is rushed through. The matter needs to be thoroughly examined and corrected with a view to ensure maximum use of national funds.

The solution of the problem, according to me, lies both in reducing the expenditure targets and in spreading the expenditure evenly over the year. There is also a necessity to create a deep-rooted sense among our functionaries that we make the best use of each and every pie of the funds at our disposal.

Giving of advance grants-in-aid to Panchayats etc. for various development projects, without preparing the ground results in the refund of money advanced in some cases and then deposit of the same into the Government Treasury. Holding of a number of community melas in the last month of the financial year without proper publicity, organisation etc. clearly means achieving merely the expenditure targets without achieving the real object underlying the scheme. A number of such instances can be quoted from all Blocks. Let all of us (various functionaries of the Block) who read this letter do our best so far as the incurring of expenditure is concerned, leaving the question of reducing the expenditure targets in Blocks to the authorities.

Yours etc.
B.D.O's Office, *Avtar Singh,*
Gohana, Head Clerk
Dist. Rohtak.

# GLIMPSES OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

**VIDUR**

THE PANCHAYATI Raj set in motion in Rajasthan a few months back is gathering momentum. It is expanding in scope as well as in quality. 'Planning from below'—a popular term in the world of economic planning these days —is becoming a reality. We will have the first taste of it when the 26 Zila Parishads, the 232 Panchayat Samitis and the constituent village panchayats of Rajasthan will plan and discuss at various levels the proposals for the third Five Year Plan.

The Panchayati Raj in action in the State has thrown up numerous problems—administrative, organisational and others on the successful tackling of which will depend the success of the new experiment. One of the outstanding problems with which the Panches and Sarpanches are currently faced with is the forging of the proper role of the teacher in the context of the Panchayati Raj. The teacher has far too long been neglected and somehow he has not been able to play the key role in the building up of the village community. To be able to achieve that is no doubt a difficult task. But if the 3-day orientation seminar attended by all primary school teachers, members of the Panchayat Samitis, Panches, Sarpanches and Gram Sevaks, held recently at Birantiya, Raipur Block, is any indication of the shape of things to come, there is every reason to be hopeful. There was a free and frank discussion of the various issues involved. The teachers no less than the Panches realised their responsibility in moulding the village community through the proper education of the children. The Panches, on their part, agreed that the teacher should be given higher pay and a more respectable status than at present. As a result of the deliberations of similar seminars held earlier in four other blocks, a healthy change in the outlook of the teachers is already visible. In about 400 primary schools, the teachers have voluntarily started cleaning the hands and faces of pupils and washing even their dirty clothes with the help of wash basins, towels, soap, hair-oil and combs provided by the Panchayat Samitis.

**OFF-SEASON ACTIVITY**

Availing of the leisure of the off-season, the villagers participated in 'Shramdan' campaigns, launched in various parts of the country. Works like bunding and clearing of drains meant to ward off any possible danger from the floods due to coming monsoons, proved popular. Worth mentioning is the community effort made by the people of 40 villages of the backward "Bet" area of Chamkaur Sahib Community Development Block in the Punjab, who joined hands together to forestal the annual flood havoc caused by Siswan, a rivulet. They constructed one and a half mile long bund within 15 days. This is 15 feet wide at the top, 40 feet at the base and 4 feet in height. It involved 22 lakh cubic feet of earth work of which at least 50% was contributed through 'Shramdan'. The villagers were awarded 16 radio sets for the village community. More enduring and satisfying, of course, was the fact that the bund will save 800 acres of cultivated land from floods and that it will facilitate reclamation of an additional area of 3,000 acres.

Equally inspiring is the news from village Pem in U.P. where an army of 300 volunteers led by a woman is currently engaged in clearing a rivulet of large chunks of earth and stones blocking its flow and of repairing a bridge over it. This will prevent widespread water logging in the area which occurred last year during the rainy season. The bridge will open up the only convenient passage from the neighbouring villages to the outside world.

Bunding is an excellent means of soil conservation. The States of Maharashtra and Rajasthan have done remarkably well in this field. A tiny village like Yerawale, 35 miles from Satara in Maharashtra carried out bunding the masonry work which cost about Rs. 10,000 —the State contribution being only Rs. 2,500. The villagers are expected to put in an additional earth work of Rs. 10,000. A number of villages have carried out

similar bunding works on a mass scale which is certainly worthy of emulation by other villages.

**SMALL INDUSTRIES**

This is one side of the picture. The weak spots of the programme where efforts lagged behind the objectives held, have also been apparent. The inadequacy of the Small Industries programme generally throughout the countryside has been in evidence from the very start. Cottage industries organised and aided by the Khadi Gramudyog Board and Pilot Projects in small industries have been tried with varying success in different States. The lessons learnt through trial and error will not however, go in vain. These will serve as guide posts for the future. The necessity for improving the techniques of production is being increasingly recognised. It is hoped that as rural electrification goes apace, power will play an important role in stabilising the small scale industries. Even in case of village industries where optimum production is determined by human energy, the trend is towards improving the tools and equipment to an extent that these can stand in competition against large scale production. A veteran Sarvodaya worker like Shri Satish Chandra Das Gupta recently observed that the Ambar Charkha should be capable of producing 32 hanks in 8 hours so that handspinning does not depend on restrictions on mills or subsidies but that it should be able to stand on its own strength economically. This is not difficult to be realised in view of the advances recently made in research on Ambar Charkha. It is understood that the newly evolved model of Ambar Charkha is capable of producing 16 hanks in 8 hours and that it can be reasonably expected to reach 24 hanks of yarn using human energy. It has been observed that wherever village industries were properly organised and run on a cooperative basis, these had proved a success. The difficulties of raw material, equipment, credit and marketing are best solved through cooperation. The Digha Charma Silpa Samabaya Samiti is a case in point. This is a small society consisting of 60 members, successfully carrying on the profession of shoe-making in a small village Digha near Calcutta. Till a few years ago, their trade had been dwindling and they were living from hand to mouth. On joining the society the members got training in the improved technology of the craft. As a result of their training and the facilities provided by the cooperative society, their trade flourished so much that last year, they sold shoes worth Rs. 80,000.

It is hoped that the village industries like Agriculture will best succeed if carried on on a 'package programme' basis. The trend is in favour of having rural industrial centres providing common facilities, a composite sales depot for marketing and supply, a museum of local products and crafts, an Ambar Charkha Production programme and a "cluster" type of training institute. It is proposed to establish 1,000 centres of this type during the third Five Year Plan period.

It has been said time and again that under our proprogramme it is the landed and the richer classes who have benefited more than the backward ones. What is the use of Panchayati Raj if the same old approach is to continue? Instances are not lacking where Panchayats have shown their traditional wisdom in looking upon the whole village as one community. In village Salgare of Maharashtra, it was found that out of 400 wells, 140 could spare irrigation water for being shared with the neighbours. At the initiative of the village Panchayat, these wells were thrown open free of cost to meet the irrigation requirements of all the neighbouring fields irrespective of their ownership. The result was a record crop that the village had ever seen in its past history. One only wishes that the wise example set up by this Panchayat were followed at other places too. There is not the least doubt that there would be number of wells in each village lying unused to the optimum limit because of the barrier of ownership coming in the way. Here is a challenge for our new Panchayats to take up, in view of the food shortage in the country!

# LATRINES FOR RURAL HOMES

DR. RAM DAS

*Director, Planning, Research & Action Institute, Lucknow*

THE PRESENT practice of squatting in the open by the village folk for easing themselves is not only insanitary and unhygienic but is also objectionable from the point of view of ordinary decency. The village people in general and the women folk, children and the sick in particular, suffer from this malady. With the increasing pressure of population in the villages, all the waste lands having bushes and trees which used to provide some privacy to the women folk, have been increasingly utilised for cultivation with the result that this problem is assuming a serious proportion, especially in such seasons when there are no standing crops in the fields.

Usually, the adjoining fields near village 'abadi' are used by the children, women folk, the old and the sick for easing themselves and thus night-soil remains littered there, giving offensive odour and making the area very insanitary. The village women are the worst sufferers, as they go to the adjoining fields for the call of nature either very early in the morning or quite late in the evening when it is dark. In certain areas, it has been observed that women folk, as they are busy from early in the morning, do not go to the fields in the morning but develop a habit of going late in the evening.

This practice is very unhealthy and is open to serious objections. But, under the existing circumstances, there does not appear to be any way out. The sick and the children also suffer on that score and utilise the courtyards of their houses or the land adjoining them for easing themselves. This practice is all the more insanitary as the night-soil forms a good breeding ground for flies, which are responsible for spreading various diseases in the villages. Service latrines hardly exist in most of the villages in the countryside, but wherever they do, the system of their cleaning and excreta disposal is so defective that it makes the village environments all the more insanitary. This is a serious problem and the Planning, Research & Action Institute was asked to develop a sanitary latrine befitting the needs and the resources of the village people.

### MODEL SPECIFICATIONS

With a view to developing a suitable type of latrine, the different types of latrines available in the country were obtained. The available literature was studied. As a result of the study made, it was felt that a suitable latrine be developed which should conform to the following standards :—

1. The design of the latrine should be simple and should conform to the existing habits regarding the disposal of human excreta;
2. The latrine should be conveniently used and its total cost should be within the means of the village-masses;
3. It must have a water-seal so that it may be flushed with the minimum amount of water to keep it clean;
4. The material to be used for the construction of latrine should, as far as as possible, be available locally;
5. The latrine structure should be durable and the disposal pit should be large enough so that frequent removal of sullage is not necessary;
6. The place required for fixing a latrine should be small so that its construction even inside the village homes may be possible;
7. The disposal of excreta should be so arranged that the composted faeces may be utilised as manure for agricultural purposes. This can be possible if the night soil is permitted to stay in the pit for a period of about 4 to 6 months after it is filled; and

8. The latrine pit should be so sealed that it may not become a breeding place for mosquitoes.

As a result of this study, the first design was developed and used in the premises of the Institute. Observations were made on its efficacy. It was found to be unsatisfactory. Later on, a number of other designs were developed and tried. The fourth design was tried in some villages and opinions of the people were asked for. As a result of their suggestions the final design, which is now known as the P.R.A.I. design, has been developed. It is acceptable to the villaage people and it conforms to the criteria laid down above.

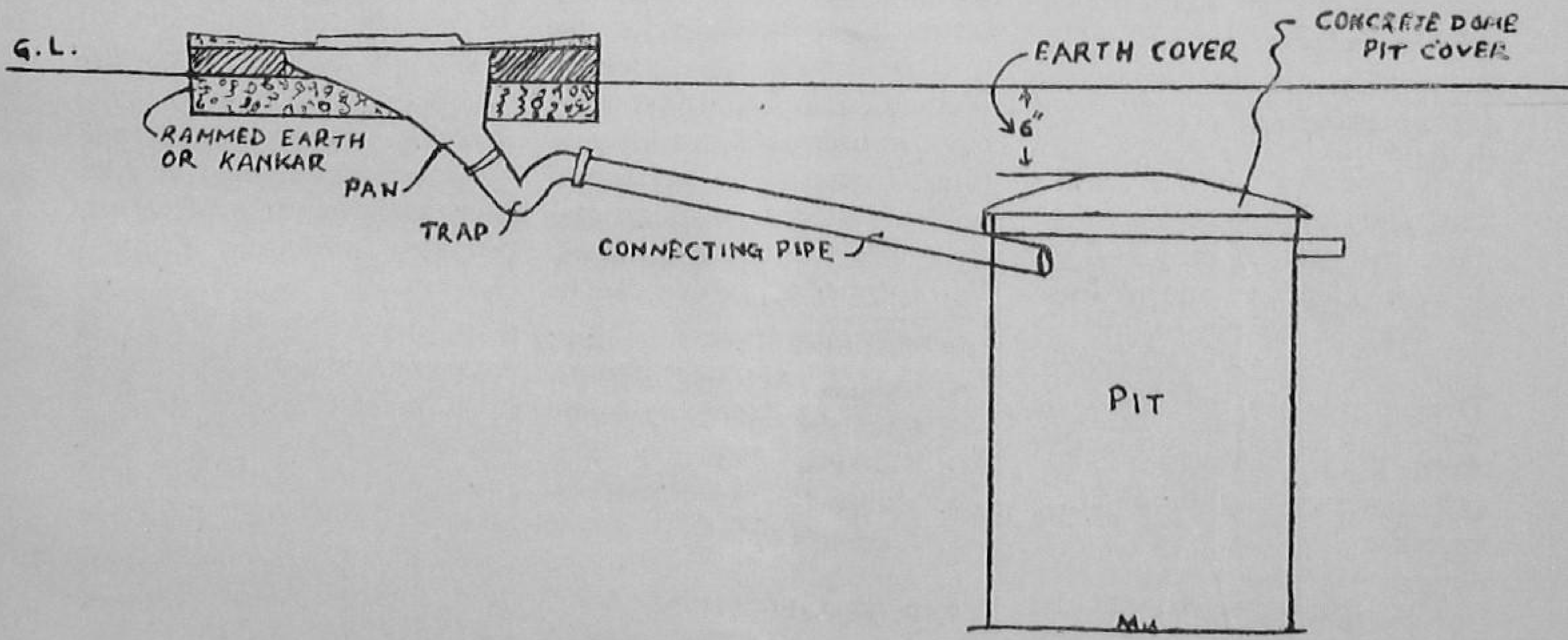
dome-pit cover costs another Rs. 5. It is so strong as to support the weight of a cattle in the village. The total cost of these parts is, therefore, about Rs. 10. For installing a latrine and for providing a foundation work another Rs. 12 are needed.

**LOCATION**

A site which is not likely to be flooded with rain, should be chosen for installing the latrine. So far as possible, the pit should not be located near drains as the water may cause the pit to collapse. The latrine should be installed as near to the house as possible. A common solution may be to have the latrine in the court yard of the house with the pit outside. The latrine pit should

then be dug in ground for pan and trap. The pan and trap should be placed in position with the pan projecting 3 above the ground level. It should be ensured that the trap is horizontal so as to form a good water seal. The water seal is most important as it prevents flies and mosquitoes going in and the smell coming out.

The pan and trap should be joined by placing the socket of the trap over the outlet of the pan and packing the space between with cement mortar. The earth around the pan should be tramped firmly to make a good foundation for the floor. The floor 3′ × 2′ 6″ should be made around the pan with one course brick

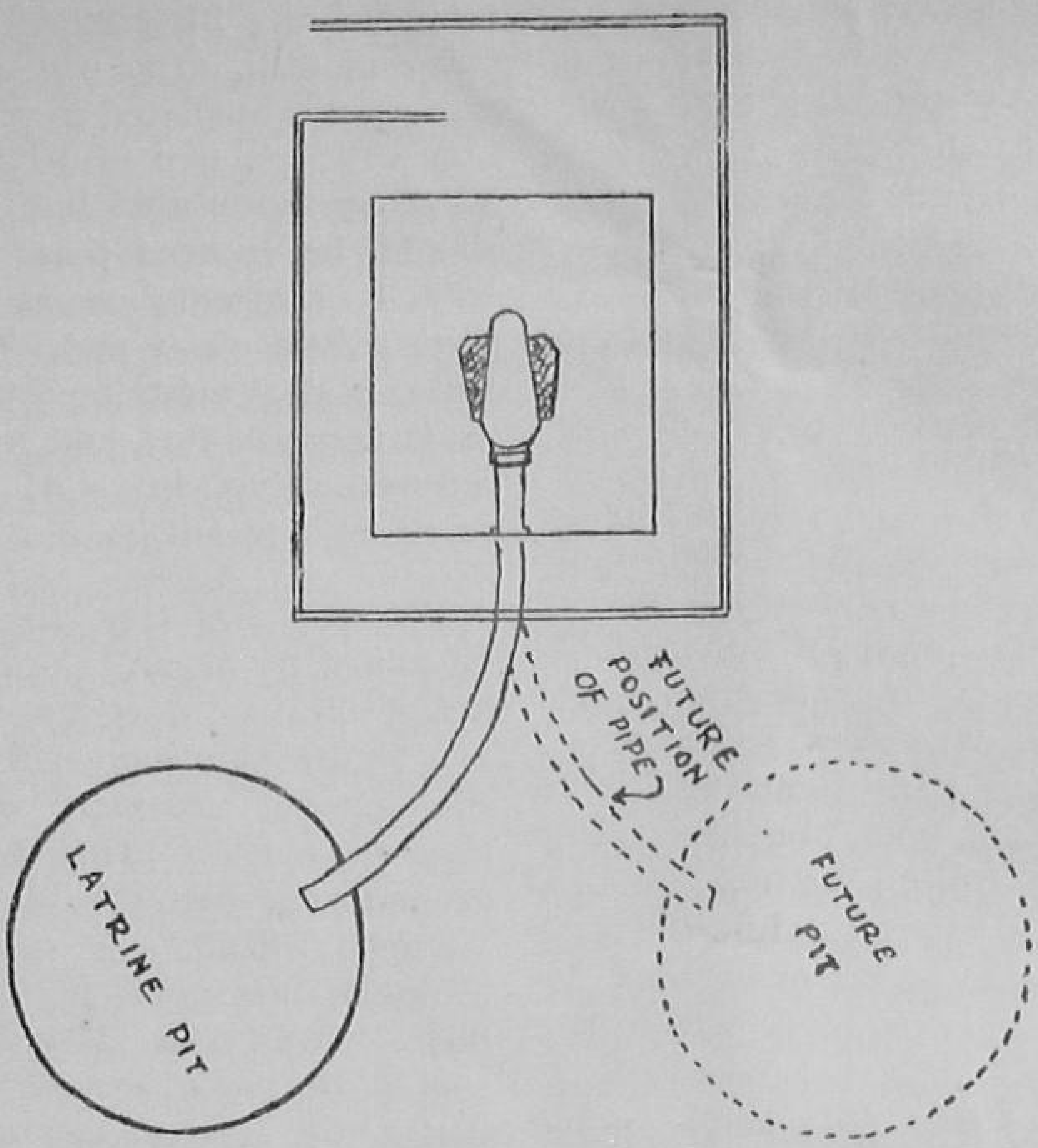



This latrine consists of four parts—a pan, a water seal trap, a bent pipe and a dome. The cost of one set consisting of a pan, a trap and a connecting pipe is about Rs. 5. They are made of concrete. A concrete

not be dug nearer than 25 ft. from a drinkng water well.

It will be helpful to have the plan of the squatting plate, pipe and the pit drawn before starting the construction. A hole may

work, set in cement mortar, with a half inch slope from the outer edge to the pan to facilitate the flow of water spilt on the platform to the pan. The top of the floor should be plastered with cement mortar.




utilised for manurial purposes.

In order to determine how village people like these latrines, a project, known as W.H.O. Environmental Sanitation Project, was started by the Planning, Research & Action Institute in about 22 villages in Chinhat Shadow Block of Lucknow district. The programme of installation of latrines was preceded by a Health Education Programme for creating necessary urge in the people for accepting this programme. A few demonstrative units were set up in five villages in the initial stages. As people developed a liking for these latrines, nearby villages also came forward for the installation of latrines in their homes. The following table shows the total number of latrines constructed in villages of Chinhat Shadow Block :—

The extension pipe should be connected to trap by placing pipe over the trap outlet. The pipe should have a slope or fall of atleast one inch in every foot of length and should project about 4″ into the pit. A circular pit 2′ 9″ in diameter and at least 6′ deep below the end of the pipe, should be excavated. Deeper pits are preferable as they last longer. One course of bricks should be laid in mortar around the top of the pit.

The pit cover should be placed over the pit and covered with 6 earth. It is extremely important that there should be no cracks allowing flies or mosquitoes to enter the pit.

**ADVANTAGES**

The advantages of this latrine are that it is quite cheap. If it is flushed with water immediately after use it remains ever clean. Women folk in particular have appreciated working of this latrine. The parts can be fabricated by village masons after a short training. The composted faeces can be

Table showing the progress made in the installation of latrines in villages of Shadow Block, Chinhat, Lucknow.

| *Name of village* | *No. of latrines* | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Chinhat | 113 | |
| 2. Ismailganj | 90 | |
| 3. Naubasta | 70 | |
| 4. Malhaur | 68 | |
| 5. Juggaur | 66 | |
| 6. Amraigaon | 58 | |
| 7. Papnamau | 48 | |
| 8. Matiari | 39 | |
| 9. Uttar Dhauna | 36 | |
| 10, Bharwara Khurd | 29 | |
| 11. Bharwara Kalan | 17 | |
| 12. Ghazipur | 12 | |
| 13. Lalpur | 10 | Work taken up recently. |
| 14. Kamta | 8 | Work taken up recently. |
| 15. Vijaipur | 7 | Work taken up recently. |
| 16. Laulai | 7 | Work taken up recently. |

| Name of village | No. of latrines | |
|---|---|---|
| 17. Semra | 6 | Work taken up recently. |
| 18. Narendi | 6 | |
| 19. Panigaon | 6 | |
| 20. Anaura | 6 | |
| 21. Benipurwa | 2 | |
| 22. Tera Sarai | 1 | |
| Total .. | 705 | |

As a result of these trials, it was felt that a similar Pilot Project should be started in the Western districts of Uttar Pradesh also and later on in the eastern districts. A group of 12 villages has accordingly been selected in Meerut Block. People appear to be receptive even from the very beginning for constructing latrines in their homes. About 60 latrines have been completed and 184 installed in about two months time in their Block. After this another area in the eastern districts is proposed to be selected. This is being done because the water level in the eastern districts is very high and it presents some difficulty in digging a suitable type of pit. In the rainy season, the problem of excreta disposal is to be studied in a greater detail. Two more projects in Bundelkhand and hill districts are to be tried later on. With a view to finding out how people accept the construction of latrines in their homes, action-programme is proposed to be taken in five regions of the State as indicated above. Though these studies will continue with different objectives in view, it has been established that the water-seal latrine, as developed in the Planning Research & Action Institute, is good almost for all areas. The size of the pits, their depth, etc., will vary from area to area. For a family of 5 members it takes about two years' time to fill in one pit. As soon as a pit is full, the dome cover is removed and the connecting pipe, which is a bent pipe, is shifted to the other side. Another pit is dug and the dome cover is placed over it. The pit which has been filled with sullage is kept covered with earth in that manner for about three months. When proper decomposition takes place, it can be taken out and used as a manure.

The Planning Research & Action Institute has carried out a stool survey in Chinhat area to find out the incidence of diseases, particularly of intestinal parasites, in the village people. It has been found that about 73% of the population suffers from such infections. This is mostly due to imporper disposal of excreta and insanitary water supplied in villages. We are trying to study as to what reduction can be brought about by the introduction of these latrines in the diseases pertaining to intestinal infections by providing water-seal latrine and sanitary drinking water supplied.

**EXTENSION PROGRAMME**

The work of constructing P.R.A.I. type latrines has been taken up in some NES Blocks by training village masons and the Assistant Development Officer (Public Health). The Planning Research & Action Institute proposes to extend this programme through the operational agency to almost all the blocks of the State in the course of a few years. Work has been taken up in about 40 blocks. A.D.Os (Public Health) and some masons from the blocks have been trained who have started the work in their respective areas. It is reported that about 350 latrines have been constructed in these blocks with a view to giving their demonstration to the people for convincing them about their need and utility.

# THE CHANGING VILLAGE

C. L. KHANNA

WHAT HAS been the impact of the Community Development programme on the village economy and the social fabric of the village life? With a view to making a first-hand assessment of the rural reconstruction activities I accompanied by a band of 20 students of the Planning Forum of the D.A.V. College, Ambala City, made a 12-day tour of selected villages in the Punjab Community Development Blocks of Panjore, Kharar, Nilokheri, Sonepat and Faridabad—besides the Bhakra-Nangal Dams and manufacturing factories in the Punjab and Delhi States. We visited 13 villages and travelled 1,500 kilometres by rail and road.

Our programme every day started at 6.30 A.M. and ended at about 11 P.M. It was an exhilarating experience for us, the town-dwellers to walk down the village lanes and talk to the ill-clad rural folk—men, women and children. At times, we required an interpreter to understand precisely the dialect of the villagers.

The inclemencies of the weather and the inconvenience of our journeys to and from villages were more than compensated by what we saw as the visible signs of a rich life that the Community Development projects had brought about. Each villager shared a spirit of pride and jubilation over his achievements made since the beginning of the Projects.

### SOCIAL IMPACT

In the Panjore Block covering 492 villages, mostly in sub-mountainous region, with a population of 38,000 a drinking-water supply scheme is being worked out. About 27 villages will derive the benefit on completion of the scheme whose last phase is proposed to be taken up in July next. These villages will no longer share with their cattle, as heretofore, the contaminated, stagnant and stinking water of the village pond. The hygienically clean and crystal clear water carried through conduit pipes affords an experience to the villagers of the glow of freedom. Notwithstanding all this, the Rampur village still runs in the old groove. The Harijan families are segregated from the high caste and are not allowed to use the village wells for procuring drinking water. The "untouchables" have to fetch water from long distances. Poverty and economic depression, apart from the social and caste-discriminations, are writ large on them.

The Community Development authorities do not appear to have cut much ice in this direction. Is this social evil inherent and deep-rooted in the fabric of our society? It is true that among the rural folk we find the social diehards and if they have lived and practised apartheid most of their lives, no legislative measures or communal persuasion can bring about a rapid social transformation. It requires an alchemist to do that. But where is one to be found?

The result of this unwarranted and anti-social discrimination is that even the economic benefits are unequally distributed. The Government grants and loans are allocated not according to the needs of the various communities but according to their bargaining power. The untouchables and others with a weak bargaining capacity are doled out meagre sums to implement their developmental schemes. Consequently, the dangers are that the social and economic inequalities instead of being bridged are ever widening. Untouchability based on casteism looms as the big question-mark baffling all solutions. The creation of a classless and casteless society will remain an unfulfilled dream.

Does this mean, however, that nothing has been done for the uplift of the downtrodden Harijans? In refreshing contrast to the apartheid practised in certain villages, the Kharar Block has raised a new Harijan colony. About a dozen brick-built two-roomed quarters on the outskirts of village Daon provide sanitary living conditions to the Harijan families of that locality. Though an isolated instance, it paves the way for the amelioration of the Harijans. Of course,

much more is needed and we must do that in a spirit of revolution for as Shri V. T. Krishnamachari, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission has put it "no social change of any magnitude has ever come about gradually."

**ECONOMIC FRONT**

On the economic front, the Community Development villages have registered visible progress. In Ajronda village in Faridabad Block, a farmer is able to raise three crops a year where he raised only one before. Potato-growing is his speciality and the majority of peasants have 18 to 20 acre holdings. On their own admission cultivators are able to raise Rs. 40,000 worth of crops during a year. Similarly, in Desu Majra in the Kharar Block, the aggregate money-yield of the potato crops in 1959 was Rs. 1.5 lakhs being more than double that of the previous year. Ajronda village which has a 220-yard metalled link-road between the village and the main Delhi-Gurgaon road, has 18 pumping sets to irrigate lands, one big cold storage for the preservation of potatoes and a cooperative joint farming society. Villages Desu Majra and Daon which are close to the towns have taken to vegetable cultivation in order to meet the increasing demand for fresh vegetables.

In the Nilokheri Block paddy cultivation is the main occupation. With the use of artificial fertilisers, quality seeds and modernised techniques of cultivation, the crop-yield has attained the new high of 30 maunds per acre (in certain cases the yield is 50 maunds per acre) which is 375 per cent of the output before the Community Development movement.

For better animal husbandry, key village centres have been set up where artificial insemination facilities for producing better breeds and foot-baths for preserving the cattle from foot-and-mouth disease as in Pujam village (Nilokheri), have been provided.

**COTTAGE INDUSTRIES**

Except the model village of Singhpura, where every household is a "factory in miniature", cottage industries in the areas visited by us, do not exist. The absence of cottage industries, the second string to the bow of the farmer, is a serious lacuna in the otherwise fairly satisfactory progress in the Community Development villages. Cooperative societies have, doubtless, helped in the economic accomplishments. But they have, so far, failed to bring about cohesion and unity in the rural life. Measured in these terms, the critics might characterise the Community Development movement as a failure. We were, however, surprised to note that while the Government aimed at inculcating the spirit of cooperation in all phases of rural life the personnel charged with this onerous responsibility exhibits little or no spirit of cooperation and coordination. The Block Development officer is essentially a liaison agency. It is, indeed, distressing to note that he is not given timely cooperation and is required, on the other hand, by the District and State authorities to shoulder the entire work of planning and implementing the schemes.

The criticism of the community development as a "mis-conceived and ill-conceived concept" is only a betrayal of ignorance of the critics. We believe, on the basis of the information obtained through our travels, that the Community Development projects, which are essentially peoples' programmes with Government participation (and not Government programmes with peoples' participation) are well-conceived and profitably implemented. In certain villages (Pujam) the people's contribution is 30 times that of the Government. Given the right type of personnel imbued with crusader's zeal to foster community life among the villages, the war on the five giants—death, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness—can be successfully waged. It has been found during the course of our meeting with the villagers and officials that not long after their appointment the officials lose their zest for work in the rural areas. In order to keep up the enthusiasm of the workers at all levels, the Government must evolve effective measures besides the orientation courses devised by it. If this were done, light will dawn where darkness prevailed eight years ago.

# YOUR SOIL IS YOUR BANK

THE INDIAN farmers have a common complaint to make: "*Dharti* (Mother Earth) is yielding less than before. Our forefathers had bumper harvests". Only a few understand that many generations of farmers have drawn crop after crop from the same field without restoring fertility to the soil because they did not return to the soil what they took out of it by way of crops. Soil fertility refers principally to the nutrient-supplying properties of the soil, such as nitrogen, phosphorous, potash, etc.

Whereas a good crop of wheat yielding about 25 mds. per acre removes on an average 25 seers of nitrogen, one of the main plant foods, from the soil, we hardly return to the soil four to five seers of nitrogen. Similarly, a crop of paddy yielding about 30 mds. per acre removes 36 to 37 srs. of nitrogen; but the amount of nitrogen generally added by way of manures by most farmers is hardly six to seven srs.

Soil is like a bank. You cannot take from it more than you deposit. Nature permits no overdrafts. Even the biggest bank balance would soon run out by this kind of one-way deal. It is obvious if India is to increase her food supply—as she must, because of the over-increasing population—steps need be taken to overcome the present low-fertility of her soils. If the farmers are to become more prosperous, if they are to have more money to raise their standard of living, soil fertility must be increased, so that each acre of their land produces more. Fortunately, this is possible by the farmers adopting some simple measures within their means which will bring increased incomes to them through increased yield and benefit the country as a whole.

## INCREASING SOIL FERTILITY

Soil fertility is improved and maintained either by adding to the stock of nutrients in the top soil from sources outside it, or adopting improved cultural practices. As regards the former, the application of animal manures and plant residues represents a return to the soil of a part of the plant nutrients which has been removed from it. A large share of the nutrients absorbed from the soil by the growing plants are permanently lost to the soil because they find their way into the body tissues of human beings and animals who feed on the crops. However, this loss can be minimised by carefully returning to the soil every scrap of plant and animal waste. This means careful collection of all the plant-straw and little which do not have to be fed to animals, as well as animal faeces and urine.

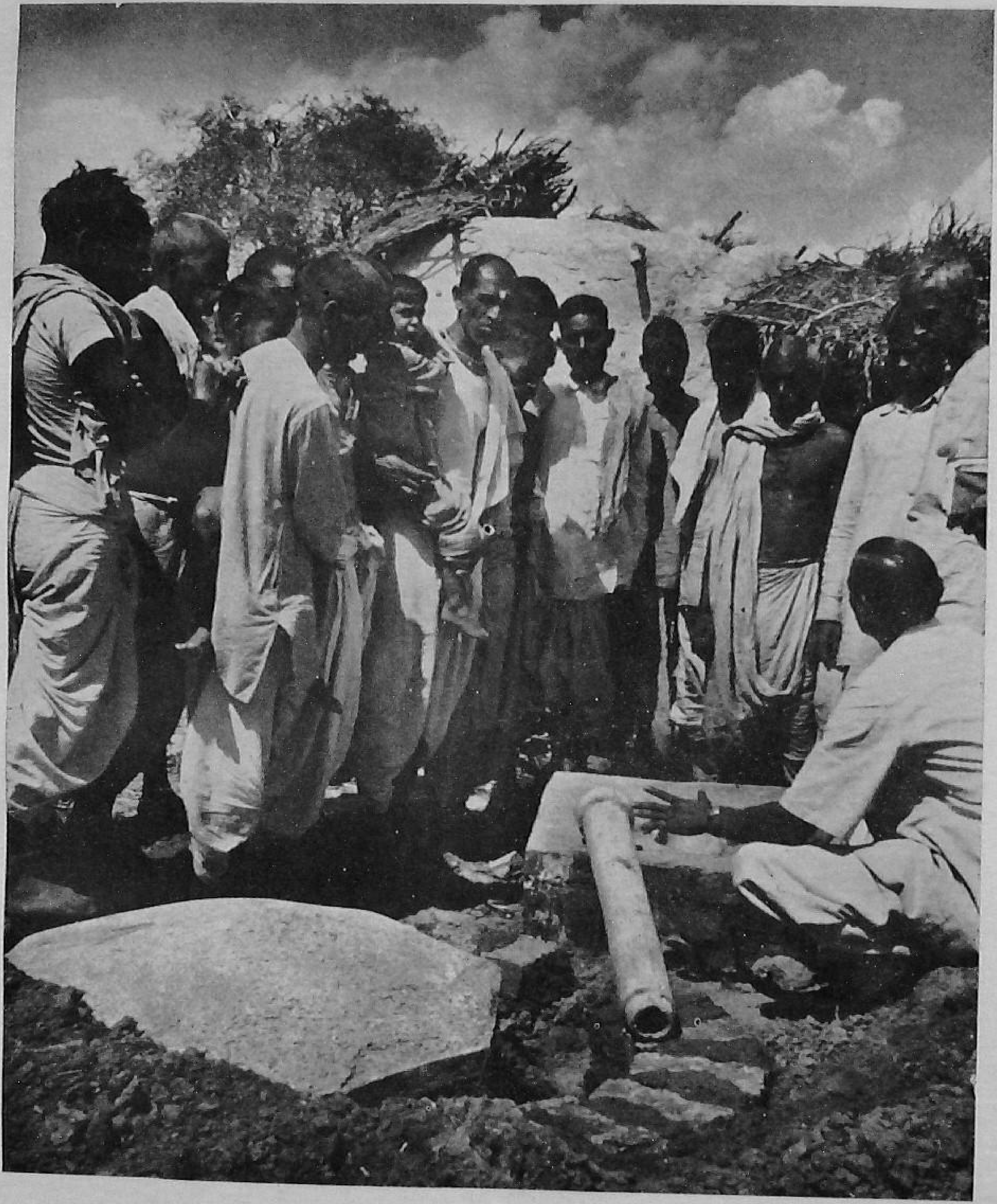
The total quantities of cowdung, urine and waste fodder and litter which are produced in India are capable of yielding 35 lakh tons of nitrogen valued at Rs. 1,100 crores per year. But we are utilising only about five lakh tons of nitrogen in the form of manures prepared by the cultivators and returned to the soil. This quantity is of the value of only Rs. 100 crores, which means that every year about Rs. 1,000 crore worth of nitrogen is being lost to the soils. This means a waste of potential supplies of nitrogen, which would require 50 Sindri Fertiliser Factories to produce every year.

The very low utilisation of this valuable source of nitrogen for improving soil fertility is due to the following defects :—

(a) A good portion, estimated at more than one-half, of the cattle-dung collected is burnt off as fuel, due to insufficiency of fuel supplies.

(b) No attempt is made to collect the urine portion by absorption in litter or earth.

(c) The manure is prepared by an inefficient method of dumping in exposed heaps above ground or in exposed shallow pits, which leads to considerable losses of organic matter and nitrogen due to excessive decomposition and volatilization of ammonia in the summer and leaching action in the rainy season.



*A Health worker of PRAI demonstrating to villagers the method of installing a PRAI type latrine.* (See the article "Latrines for Rural Homes" on page 10).

*The Japanese method of paddy cultivation is no more a novel technique in the countryside. It has become an accepted practice in the Block areas. With the onset of monsoon line planting of paddy seedlings is a common sight in the rice growing areas of the country.*

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